

The University of Chicago

CHAUCER AND THE MUSIC OF THE
FOURTEENTH CENTURY

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
HUMANITIES IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
AND LITERATURE

1938

By
CLAIR COLBY OLSON

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CHAUCER AND THE MUSIC OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY

By CLAIR C. OLSON

I

THE value of Chaucer's writings as source material for a study of music in the fourteenth century has long been recognized. In the eighteenth century, Charles Burney¹ and John Hawkins² quoted and discussed passages from his works, and scholars today have done the same.³ Since none of these, however, employ all the evidence which Chaucer's works afford us, they do not give an accurate idea of his knowledge of and interest in music, nor of the total effect which that knowledge and interest had upon his poetry. In order to do this, one should not only make a complete analysis of Chaucer's references to music, but should also discover the aspects of the music of his day which he does not mention. An examination of contemporary literature, public and private records, stained glass windows, and carvings in wood and stone shows that Chaucer does not give a complete picture of musical conditions in the fourteenth century. If one is to estimate accurately Chaucer's musical knowledge and interests, the omissions, as well as the inclusions, must be considered.

Our knowledge of fourteenth-century music comes chiefly from two sources: treatises on the theory of the art and specimens of the music which have survived. In addition we find valuable bits of description scattered through the literature and other documents of the time. Although most of the treatises are abstract, discussing music only as a mathematical science, there is one interesting exception, the *Theoria* of Johannes de Grocheo, which discusses secular and instrumental music.⁴ The most prominent theorist of the fourteenth century was Philip de Vitry, because of his association with the *Ars Nova* movement. The music of the thirteenth century had been characterized by its method of combining melodies in various strongly marked poetic rhythms against a background of triple measure, and by the use of concord only on the strong beat. The *Ars Nova*, which

¹ *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period* (London: Printed for the Author, 1782-1789). This work was reprinted with the title *A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period (1789). With Critical and Historical Notes by Frank Mercer* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935). Chaucer's works are quoted as authority for the music of his period in I, 586 and 659-666.

² *A General History of the Science and Practice of Music* (London: T. Payne and Son, 1776). This work was reprinted in London by Novello, Ewer and Company in 1875. Passages relative to music in Chaucer's works are discussed in the original edition, II, 81, 84-88, and 105-112.

³ F. W. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music, Their History and Character* (2d ed., London: Methuen, 1911); J. M. Gibbon, *Melody and the Lyric from Chaucer to the Cavaliers. With 200 Musical Illustrations* (New York [1930]). Pages 1-9 deal with Chaucer's contribution to musical history. Franz Montgomery, 'The Musical Instruments in the Canterbury Tales,' *Musical Quarterly*, xvii (1931) 439-448; J. T. Lightwood, *Music and Literature* (London: Epworth, 1931). Chapter 1 is a very hasty survey of Chaucer's references to music.

⁴ Johannes Wolf, 'Die Musiklehre des Johannes Grocheo,' *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, I (1899-1900), 65-130. In this article Professor Wolf accompanies the Latin text with a German translation and notes. Grocheo's treatise represents conditions early in the fourteenth century.

was the 'modern' music of the fourteenth century, set up beside this older system an alternative method, and thus increased the possibilities in musical composition. *Ars Nova* music was characterized by the use of duple, as well as triple, rhythm, with the two often combined in the same work; the abandonment of the fixed rhythmic modes (which were much like our standard poetic feet) for more flexible rhythmic patterns; the tendency to develop a leading upper voice with an accompanying bass, and the growth of a feeling for a strong tonality; and finally, much freer use of chromatic alteration. These developments made necessary a system of notation which could express both the pitch and the relative time values of notes in compositions of more than one part. Although not so uniform as ours, the notation of the fourteenth century, which was the ancestor of our staff notation, did both these things.

Many types of composition were in use during this period, some for both sacred and secular music, and others for only one. Out of the simple monodic plainsong of the church had developed an increasingly complex polyphonic music, based at first on themes taken from the ritualistic music, but later growing more and more original and independent. This development had led through *organum* and *conductus* to the motet, which was used for both sacred and secular works. Many of the forms used primarily for secular compositions bore the names of corresponding literary forms, such as ballad, rondel, lay, virelay, and complaint. This was only natural, as the musical compositions were settings of the poetic forms so named, and in some cases the form of the music followed that of the text rather closely. In others, however, the detailed correspondence was not so great, and the major divisions of the musical structure fell at other points than those of the words. Although the fourteenth century was primarily a time of polyphonic music, the lay, complaint, *chanson roial*, and virelay were usually monodic, and the ballad and rondel were sometimes. These types of composition were primarily vocal, but seem also to have been used at times as instrumental selections. Very little purely instrumental music has come down to us from the fourteenth century, but a few kinds of dance music, such as the *ductia* and *stantipes*, seem to have been intended for instrumental rendition.

Judging by the evidence now extant, France, the leader of western European culture, was definitely ahead of England in musical progress during this period. England had no figure to compare with Machaut as a composer or with de Vitry as a theorist. If the existence of the canon, *Sumer Is I-Cumen In*, is any indication, England had had a glorious musical epoch in the thirteenth century, and in the fifteenth, under Dunstable, she again assumed an important position, but the fourteenth century appears to have been a time of repose for English music.

Although musical instruments were, at this time, beginning to assume distinctive characteristics, they were still very crude in comparison with those of today. The organ and the viol, for example, were not capable of producing the expressive effects possible for their modern descendants. There was a sufficiently large number of types so that for practically every instrument in use today, we can find some fairly close equivalent. These older instruments can be grouped, just as ours, into string, brass (or, at least, metallic wind instruments), wood-

wind, and percussion. The wood-winds can be divided into those of the flute or whistle type and those with reeds. Many of the basic types occur in various sizes or with slight modifications that bore different names. The following list shows the chief instruments used in fourteenth-century England and France:

String instruments: bowed

Viol or fithle: French, *vielle*

Guigue

Crowd

Rebec, rybybe, ribile, or rubible: French, *rebebe*,
rubechette, and
rubicone

Monochord: French; *monocorde* or *manicorde*

Symphony or simphonie: French, *chifonie*

String instruments: plucked or struck

Gittern, gyttren, or gythorn: French, *guiterne*

Lute: French, *leu* or *luth*

Mandore or mandora: French, *mandore* or *mandola*

Citole, sytholle, or cytol: French, *citole*

Psaltery or sautrye: French, *psalterion*

Micanon: French, *micanon*, *micanon morache*

Dulcimer

Rota or cythara

Harp

Monochord: French, *monocorde* or *manicorde*

Clavichord or manichord

Clavicymbal or keyed psaltery: French, *clavecin*

Eschaquiel d'Angleterre, *echiquier*, or *exaquier*

Wind instruments: ('brass')

Trumpet: French, *trompette*

Clarion: French, *clarion*, *clarionchiau*: Latin, *claro*

Buzine: French, *buisine*

Sackbut: French, *saquebute*, *trombone*

Wind instruments: horns: French, *cor*, *corne*

Bugle

Beme or byme

Circular horn

Cornet

Wind instruments: pipes

Single pipe

Double pipe

Panpipes: French, *frestel* or *ele*

Esclife

Wind instruments: flutes: French, *flauste*, *fistule*,
flajol, *flajol de saus*,
flauste traverseinne,
flauste Brehaigne,
flahute, *flakutelle*

Flute

Recorder or doucet

Wind instruments: reeds

- Shawm or shalmele: French, *chalemelle* or *chalemie*
 Wayte pipe
 Bumbarde
 Krumhorn: French, *chromorne*. Also called *douceine*
 Hornpipe, or pibcorn
 Bagpipe, or baggepype: French, *cornemuse*, *muse*,
musette, *muse de blef*,
chevrette, *choro*,
estive, *turelure*,
turelurette

Wind instruments: organs

- Portative: French, *portatif*
 Positive: French, *positif*
 Large organ: French, *grand orgue*

Percussion instruments: drums

- Tabor: French, *tabour*, *taburel*
 Timbrel, tymbyr: French, *timbre*
 Tympanum: French, *tympanne*
 Nakers: French, *nacaire*, *naquaire*

Percussion instruments: other than drums

- Cymbals: French, *simbales*
 Triangle: French, *trépié*
 Bells: French, *cloche clochette*, *clokette*,
eschelle, *achelette*
 Chimes, or chymme bells: French, *carillon*, *orloge*

These instruments were played both singly and in groups of almost every possible combination: strings; wind; percussion; strings and wind; strings and percussion; wind and percussion; and strings, wind, and percussion. They were used as solo instruments, to furnish music for armies, processions, dances, and to accompany singing. In addition to the smaller groupings shown in carvings, paintings, and manuscript illuminations, fourteenth-century literature contains several longer lists of instruments ranging from eight to thirty-five, which are described as being played together. They are as follows:

<i>Échecs Amoureux</i>	8 ^a
<i>Lamentations de Matheolus</i>	14 ^b
<i>Deschamps' Balade 124</i>	14 ^c
<i>De Concordia inter Ric. II et Civitatem London</i>	18 ^d

^a Hermann Abert, 'Die Musikästhetik der *Échecs Amoureux*,' *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, vi (1904-1905), 346 ff.

^b Matheolus, *Les Lamentations de Matheolus et le Livre de Leesce de Jehan le Fèvre, de Resson* (Poèmes Français du XIV^e Siècle). Edition Critique, Accompagnée de l'Original Latin des Lamentations, d'après l'Unique Manuscrit d'Utrecht, d'une Introduction et de Deux Glossaires, par Anton Gerard van Hamel (Bibliothèque de l'École des Hautes Études: Sciences Philologiques et Historiques, 95-96, Paris: E. Bouillon, 1892-1905), Bk. III, ll. 2,941-2,951.

^c Eustache Deschamps, *Oeuvres Complètes de Eustache Deschamps, Publiées d'après le Manuscrit de la Bibliothèque Nationale, par le Marquis de Queux de Saint-Hilaire and Gaston Raynaud* (Paris: Firmin Didot, 1878-1903), i, 245-246, ll. 15-24.

^d Thomas Wright (ed.), *Alliterative Poem on the Deposition of King Richard II, and Maydiston, Ricardi, De Concordia inter Ric. II et Civitatem London* (London: Camden Society, 1838), p. 43.

Machaut's *Remède de Fortune*
 Machaut's *La Prise d'Alexandrie*

31°
 35^t

Although we have no detailed information as to the kind of music these ensembles played, we do know something of the circumstances in which they performed, which gives us a clue as to the nature of the music. The author of the *Échecs Amoureux* tells us that his list is composed of 'haulz instrumens,' that is, of loud instruments, which are pleasing for the dance. These are wind and percussion instruments. He contrasts them with 'instruments qui sonnoient moult doucement,' and illustrates the latter type with a list of plucked and bowed stringed instruments. The author of the *Lamentations de Matheolus*, after listing citoles, harps, and viols as being played for people to dance a carol, enumerates fifteen instruments of all varieties which were played 'pour resjouir les compaignies' and to which 'tous ensemble dancierent.'¹ It is evident that dance music was not always played by the same type of ensemble. Perhaps the carol, being a combination of song and dance, was performed to quieter music than other dances. Deschamps, in his *Balade 124*, calls upon the fourteen instruments he names to lament the death of Machaut. The list is composed of string, wind, and percussion instruments, with the strings predominating. The instruments named in the *De Concordia inter Regem Ric. II et Civitatem London* are played while the king rides in procession through London to Westminster. Although instruments of all types are listed, the strings again are in the majority, at least as far as different kinds are concerned.² The two lists by Machaut are of especial interest, not merely because of their size, but also because they were compiled by the greatest French musician of his day. He tells us that the thirty-one instruments he names in *Le Remède de Fortune* were played after dinner, and that the thirty-five he enumerates in *La Prise d'Alexandrie* were used during the festivities with which the Emperor Charles I entertained Pierre of Lusignan at his castle in Prague. This latter is apparently the longest list of musical instruments in any fourteenth-century document, and Machaut vouches for it especially. These two longest lists, of course, contain instruments of every type.

Music in the fourteenth century was performed by professional minstrels and by amateurs. In reading the literature of the period, one finds that people of all ranks sang and played musical instruments. Members of the royalty and nobility not only sponsored music as one of their duties, but in some cases they showed a keen personal interest in the art. Ladies, knights, and squires were expected to

* Guillaume de Machaut, *Oeuvres*, ed. Ernest Hoepffner (Société des Anciens Textes Français, Paris: Firmin, Didot, 1908-1921), II, 144-145.

¹ Guillaume de Machaut, *La Prise d'Alexandrie; ou Chronique du Roi Pierre I^{er} de Lusignan*, ed. M. L. de Mas Latrie (Publications de la Société de l'Orient Latin, Série Historique, I, Geneva, 1877), II, 1, 140-1, 177.

² I am here referring to the lists as they occur in the French translation. They are shorter in the Latin original. See Matheolus, *op. cit.*, II, 3,559-3,560 and 3,579-3,582.

³ As in all the lists, the instruments are named in the plural, so that one can make no statement as to the proportion in which each type was represented.

be able to sing and play; and members of the prosperous middle classes imitated them in this respect. Organizations known as *puis* were formed by wealthy merchants, who centered their social activities around the composition and singing of songs. The various guilds of the time often used music in their ceremonies, and the lower classes sang and played in the taverns and on village greens and market places.

A society like this naturally had many songs. The love and nature lyrics, which were composed in large numbers, were often conventional in thought as well as form; but the popular songs, though usually of small literary merit, were a powerful political and social force. They reflect contemporary life in its varied aspects, either accurately or satirically, and were often used for political propaganda or to form public opinion. The wide range of their subjects is shown by the following typical instances: an indictment of the Order of the Temple, a comment on the religious situation at Avignon, a lament over the prevailing bad taste in music and the other arts, a diatribe against bishops, celebrations of the enthronization of monarchs and archbishops, praise of famous and liberal nobles, and a lament on the death of Machaut. Many of these were written in the macaronic style, which combined into one text alternating passages in two languages. Unfortunately, most of these popular songs have come down to us without their music. This is less often true of the rondels, ballads, and virelays which men like Machaut wrote, for they were considered artistic productions, and the music to which they were sung was more frequently preserved.

Not only the literature of the fourteenth century but also the public documents and private records furnish us with many details about the professional musicians, or minstrels, who formed one of the most interesting and colorful groups of their period. Their number was legion, and many of them hardly deserved to be called professional musicians in any sense of the term. Mere jugglers and mountebanks, they often had the reputation of being rogues and rascals, eager to get whatever they could by any means. Lower still were those who, not minstrels at all, used the guise as a means to all sorts of underhanded dealing. This situation called forth various attempts to regulate and elevate the profession, partly by kings and nobles, and partly by the better element among the musicians themselves. These attempts resulted in edicts,¹ courts, such as those at Chester² and Tutbury,³ and, highest of all, minstrel guilds, of which the Paris

¹ For example, the Statute of Arms for Tournaments, passed in 1295, which stipulated that 'Nul Roy de Harraunz ne Menestrels portent privez armez.' E. L. Cutts, *Scenes and Characters of the Middle Ages* (London: Virtue, 1872), p. 297.

² Founded, according to tradition, in 1210, by Randall Blundeville, Earl of Chester, to license and control the minstrels in and around Chester. It lasted until the middle of the eighteenth century. E. K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage* (Oxford, 1903), I, 55 and II, 259.

³ In 1380 John of Gaunt issued letters patent setting up an annual court of minstrels presided over by officers of their own selection. The court had jurisdiction over all minstrels in the counties of Staffordshire, Derby, Nottingham, Leicester, and Warwick, and, like the one at Chester, lasted well into the eighteenth century. Henry Kirke, 'The Ancient Court of Minstrels at Tutbury,' *Journal of the Derbyshire Archaeological and Natural History Society*, xxxii (1910), 105-113.

gild was for many years the finest example.¹ From these facts it is clear that there were many types of minstrels, from the very low to the very high, both in ability and character. Minstrels could and did rise to positions of wealth and prominence in the society of their day: they owned property, entered into legal agreements, and conducted themselves like professional men of the highest type. At the top were the musicians whom kings and wealthy nobles supported in their households, often upon lifetime agreements as to conditions of employment and amounts of wages. Minstrels of the better type were even patronized by the clergy, for whom they performed in the monasteries, in spite of the theoretical ban upon them, much as they did for the secular nobles in the castles. When those who were attached to courts were not needed there, they traveled and performed throughout the country, under letters of protection from their patron, which put them at a great advantage over their poorer brethren who had no other resource but to wander continually, performing wherever and whenever they could, and frequently offering entertainment which was not only of little artistic merit, but was crude and vulgar as well.

The upper strata of minstrels usually presented material of a high artistic quality, and held annual schools or conventions, to which they repaired in Lent to replenish their repertoires and perhaps learn new accomplishments.² They performed at a wide variety of occasions, but their most artistic work was done in the courts of the great kings and nobles of their time, where they regaled entire households during and after meals and at all sorts of feasts and celebrations, not only with solo performances, both vocal and instrumental, but also with ensemble music.

¹ Founded in 1321 when thirty-seven 'jongleurs et jongleresses,' headed by Pariset, a minstrel of the king, appeared before the *prérot* of Paris with a set of regulations consisting of eleven articles which they had drawn up by common consent of the 'ménestres et ménestrelles, joughers et jougheresses' living in Paris, for the purpose of reforming their craft and aiding their common profit. These regulations were altered and strengthened in 1397 and were superseded by new ones in 1407. This gild not only controlled the minstrels in Paris, but also supported a church and a hospital. It lasted until the end of the seventeenth century. B. Bernhard, 'Recherches sur l'Histoire de la Corporation des Ménestriers ou Joueurs d'Instruments de la Ville de Paris,' *Bibliothèque de l'École des Chartes*, 1st series, III (1841-1842), 377-404; 1st series, IV (1842-1843), 525-548.

In January 1389 all gilds in England were required to submit their regulations for examination by the government. Among the gilds that submitted their regulations was only one minstrel gild, that of the 'Minstrels and Players of Lincoln.' J. T. Smith, ed., *English Gilds* (London: Trübner, 1870), p. 294.

² We have records that minstrel 'schools' were held at Bourg-en-Bresse in 1373, 1377, 1387, and 1388. L. Gautier, *Les Épopées Françaises, Études sur les Origines et l'Histoire de la Littérature Nationale* (2d ed., Paris: Victor Palmé, 1892), II, 177-178. About this same time schools were also held at Beauvais, Lyons, Geneva, and Cambrai; and we have the record of an ordinance that in 1407 no minstrel school could be held in Paris without a license (*ibid.*, pp. 175-178). Throughout the fourteenth century, household accounts and other records show that the minstrels of kings and nobles were given permission to attend minstrel schools, and often had their expenses paid. See, for example, T. Gérold, *La Musique au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1932), pp. 366 and 415; J. Strutt, *The Sports and Pastimes of the People of England from the Earliest Period* (New Edition, London: Methuen, 1903), p. 164; C. Du Cange, *Glossarium Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* under 'Ministelli'; Chambers, *Mediaeval Stage*, I, 53.

Although music in the fourteenth century touched the lives of many people, that which corresponded to our modern artistic and concert music seems to have been available only to people of wealth, in whose homes the better professional musicians of the time performed. Such music was entirely on a patronage basis, for our present concert system, with its more democratic approach to a 'public,' did not then exist.

II

As might be expected, Chaucer displays very little familiarity with theoretical writers on music. He mentions no one contemporary with himself, the only theorist he names being Boethius, a writer of the sixth century, whose work, nevertheless, was consulted even in the fourteenth century, and whose *De Consolatione Philosophiae* Chaucer translated. In the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, the fox, in describing the various abilities of the cock, says to him,

Therwith ye han in musik more felinge
Than hadde Boece or any that can singe.¹

This tells us very little, however, being only a humorous mention of his name which does not even show that Chaucer had read his treatise, *De Musica*. The discussion of the physical nature of sound in the *Hous of Fame* has been traced to other writers as well as Boethius.² This sums up all the evidence as to Chaucer's familiarity with theoretical writers on music.

Several passages in Chaucer's poetry that might seem to indicate an interest in the technical aspects of music probably show only a broad interest in several aspects of life. For example, the description of the nature of sound, in the *Hous of Fame*, with its figure of speech likening sound to 'air-ybroken' and 'twist with violence' when musical instruments are played, seems to indicate merely a general interest in scientific matters, especially since this figure was not original with Chaucer.³ As we know that he was interested in several sciences of his time, such as physiology, medicine, alchemy, and astrology,⁴ this is a fair assumption. Again, authorities tell us that there is excellent reason for intoning the recitative portions of the church service through the nose, in order to avoid unnecessary strain on the vocal chords, and that this has been known for centuries;⁵ yet I believe it was Chaucer's roguish delight in humorous incongruity that caused him to say of the sweet and prim Prioress,

¹ B, 4,483-4,484. Unless otherwise stated, all subsequent references to Chaucer's writings are to W. W. Skeat, *The Student's Chaucer* (Oxford, [1895]).

² W. O. Sypherd points out parallels in Vincent of Beauvais' *Speculum Naturale*, cap. 14, and in Macrobius' *Commentary*, II, 4, as well as in Boethius' *De Musica*, I, 3, to Chaucer's passage, which is ll. 765-781 of the *Hous of Fame*. *Studies in Chaucer's Hous of Fame* (London, 1907), pp. 97-99.

³ Macrobius, whose *Commentary* T. R. Lounsbury thinks Chaucer may have known, uses 'fidibus' and 'tibiis' where Chaucer names 'harpe-strings' and 'pypes.' *Studies in Chaucer, His Life and Writings* (New York: Harper, 1892), II, 249-250. See also Sypherd, *loc. cit.*

⁴ Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ed. J. M. Manly (New York: Holt, 1928), pp. 132-144. Chaucer's two references to the music of the spheres (*Parlement of Foules*, ll. 57-62, and *Troilus and Criseyde*, v, 1,807-1,813) are probably even less significant for our purpose, as the idea was so old and well accepted. ⁵ J. M. Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer* (New York, 1926), pp. 216-217.

Ful wel she song the service divyne,
Entuned in hir nose ful semely;¹

rather than a particular interest in the technique of voice production. The same is doubtless true when he compares the 'stif burdoun' of the Somonour to a trumpet,² and when, in describing the snoring of the miller and his wife in the *Reeve's Tale*, he says, 'His wyf bar him a burdon, a ful strong.'³ We may safely say, I believe, that Chaucer's writings give little evidence that he possessed any significant interest in the theoretical or technical aspects of music.⁴

A much more important question is whether or not Chaucer composed music. Also it is one on which we have more reason to expect an affirmative answer, as he worked, at least in his early years, directly in the method advocated by Machaut. The latter, both poet and musician, 'insisted that the lyric poet should compose the music as well as the words of his songs,'⁵ between which there was to be a close relation in form. We know that Machaut himself did both, and it would not be surprising if Chaucer did also, but we have no evidence of the fact. In spite of the probable disappearance of most of Chaucer's lyrics,⁶ and in spite of the didactic and satirical vein which, as Professor Robinson points out, makes some of the few we have inappropriate for a musical setting,⁷ Chaucer did write some beautifully flowing lyric verse that has survived to our day; some of it in short, detached pieces, such as *To Rosemounde*, *Womanly Noblesse*, *Fortune*, *Truth*, *Gentillesse*, *Lak of Stedfastnesse*, and *Merciles Beaute*; and some embedded in his longer poems. Of these latter, the most famous are 'Now welcom somer with thy sonne softe,' sung by the birds at the end of the *Parliament of Fowls*,⁸ and the *balade* in the *Legend of Good Women*, 'Hyd, Absolon! thy gilte tresses clere,' sung by the women in the train of the god of love 'in carol-wyse.'⁹ The *Knight's Tale* contains the first three lines of a roundel sung by Arcite;¹⁰ in the *Book of the Duchess* the 'man in blak'

Sayde a lay, a maner song,
Withoute note, withoute song;¹¹

¹ A, 122-123.

² A, 672-674.

³ A, 4,165-4,166. Emma Dieckmann believes that we should understand the term 'burdoun' to mean, in the first of these two cases, 'a monotonous and repetitious ground melody' sung by the Somonour in a droning voice, and in the second, a figuratively humorous application of this term to the wife's snoring. 'The Meaning of *Bourdoun* in Chaucer,' *Modern Philology*, xxvi (1928-1929), 279-282. The reference, evidently to fauxbourdon, a method of accompanying songs much used in church music, again illustrates Chaucer's delight in humorous incongruity.

⁴ Chaucer's reference, in the *Book of the Duchess*, ll. 304-305, is to so obvious an aspect of music as to be of no value for our purpose. In ll. 313-316 he uses 'armonyne' and 'melodye' in their older general sense of 'pleasing sound.' In the fourteenth century they were not differentiated as they are today. ⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 503.

⁶ J. M. Manly, *Chaucer and the Rhetoricians* (London, 1926), pp. 5-6. See also the *Legend of Good Women*, A-Text, ll. 398-399, and *Canterbury Tales*, I, 1,086. For contemporary references to Chaucer's lyrics, see John Lydgate, *Falls of Princes*, ed. Henry Bergen (London, 1924-1927), I, Prologue, ll. 351-354; and John Gower, *Complete Works*, ed. G. C. Macaulay (Oxford, 1899-1902), III, 466, ll. 2,941-2,947. ⁷ Chaucer, *Complete Works*, ed. F. N. Robinson (Boston: 1933), p. 612.

⁸ Ll. 673-699. That Chaucer wrote no music for this song is made clear by his statement in line 677 that 'The note, I trowe, maked was in France.' 'Note' here means 'tune.'

⁹ A-Text, ll. 203-223. In the B-Text, Chaucer 'says' this song in honor of 'this lady fre.'

¹⁰ A, 1,510-1,512.

¹¹ Ll. 462-485.

in *Troilus and Criseyde*, Antigone sings her 'Trojan song';¹ and Troilus sings several songs indicative of his feelings in regard to love.² From these it is clear that Chaucer, in spite of the predominantly narrative character of his poetry, did write some verse that could easily have been set to music like Machaut's, but whether he or anyone else did set it to music is a question we cannot now answer.

That he did is made probable not merely by Chaucer's work in the school of Machaut, but also by his appointment as squire in the English court, for the squires were expected to entertain guests with poetry and music of various types.³ This probability is heightened by the view that Chaucer probably was educated at the Inner Temple, where young men were trained partly for a professional career such as Chaucer had, and partly for the social activities that would be expected of such men.⁴ On the other hand, none of the tributes paid to Chaucer by his poetic contemporaries specifically mentions any musical ability on his part, for references to 'balades, roundels, vielayes,' 'ditees,' and 'songes glade' may be to poems as well as to music.⁵ Even Deschamps, another disciple of Machaut, who calls Chaucer 'Poète hault, loënge d'escuirie,'⁶ says nothing of his musical ability. The truth is probably that Chaucer, as a young man at least, had some skill in music, was able to play some instruments, and may have composed music for some of his lyric poems. His ability and interest in poetry, however, early seem to have outstripped these musical interests, especially as he grew away from the Machaut school of poetry and began to write the realistic narratives on which his fame primarily rests. Had Chaucer been an English Machaut, we should probably have evidence of both sides of his career.

Chaucer names a fairly wide variety of musical instruments in his works, each of the groups in my list on pages five and six being represented, although almost always by a smaller number of different types. Chaucer's list, classified like that just referred to, is as follows:

String instruments: bowed

Rubible⁷

Simphonie⁸

String instruments: plucked or struck

Giterne⁹

Harpe¹⁰

Sautrye¹¹

Lute¹²

Rote¹³

¹ II, 824-882. ² *Ibid.*, I, 386-420; III, 1,737-1,771; V, 631-646.

³ F. J. Furnivall, ed., *Life-Records of Chaucer* (London, 1900), xiv, 70 and xiii-xiv. See also *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 13. ⁴ Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer*, chap. 1.

⁵ Thomas Hoccleve, *The Regement of Princes, A.D. 1411-1412, from the Harleian Ms. 4866, and Fourteen of Hoccleve's Minor Poems, from the Egerton Ms. 615*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (London, 1897), pp. 71, 75-76, and 179. ⁶ *Oeuvres Complètes*, II, 138-140.

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 3,331 and 4,396.

⁸ *Ibid.*, Group B, l. 2,005.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 3,333, 3,353, 4,396; Group C, l. 466; Group H, l. 268.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Group A, l. 266; Group B, l. 2,005; Group C, l. 466; Group D, l. 457; Group H, l. 268; *Hous of Fame*, ll. 773 and 1,201; *Legend of Good Women*, B-Text, l. 90; *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. II, l. 1,031. ¹¹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 296, 3,213, and 3,305.

¹² *Ibid.*, Group C, l. 466; Group H, l. 268.

¹³ *Ibid.*, Group A, l. 236.

Wind instruments

Trompe¹
 Clarioun²
 Horn³
 Beme⁴
 Liltling horn⁵
 Pype⁶
 Pypes of grene corn⁷
 Floute⁸
 Doucet⁹
 Organ¹⁰
 Cornemuse¹¹
 Shalmye¹²
 Rede¹³

Percussion instruments

Tabour¹⁴
 Naker¹⁵
 Belle¹⁶

Although Chaucer does not mention a very large number of musical instruments in his writings, those he does name represent all the principal groups, and, if used in ensemble, would constitute a well-balanced orchestra. Perhaps the most significant omission is of stringed instruments with a keyboard, such as the *eschaquier* or the keyed psaltery. These, however, were probably not as common in his day as the simpler ones he lists. Although his enumeration may not show a professional attitude toward music, it does reveal Chaucer to us as observant of the details of musical activity, as he was of those in other fields and of life in general.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of Chaucer's references to the musical prac-

¹ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 674, 2,174, 2,511, 2,565, 2,600, 2,671; Group B, ll. 705 and 1,719; Group I, l. 159; *Hous of Fame*, ll. 1,240 and 1,624 ff.; *Legend of Good Women*, l. 635.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 2,511 and 2,600; *Boethius*, Bk. II, Metre 5, l. 24; *Hous of Fame*, ll. 1,240, 1,573, and 1,579.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 705, and 4,588-4,589; Group F, ll. 1,252-1,253 (here referred to as a drinking horn, but might also be blown, especially after it had been emptied, thus showing that its user could quaff its contents, perhaps at a draught.) Group H, l. 90, in which there is probably a play on the double meaning of 'horn' (cf. Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 871).

⁴ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, l. 4,588; *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,240. ⁵ *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,223.

⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 773-774. *Parlement of Foules*, l. 178; *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 2,511; Group B, l. 2,005. ⁷ *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,224. ⁸ *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,223.

⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 1,221. ¹⁰ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, l. 4,041; Group G, l. 134.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Group A, l. 565; *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,218. ¹² *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,218.

¹³ *Ibid.*, l. 1,221. Although it is possible that 'rede' is only the name of a class of instruments, those with a reed, it is here used so as to be parallel with the names of specific instruments.

¹⁴ *Legend of Good Women*, A-Text, l. 330. The word is here used figuratively, in the sense of 'drumming something in.' ¹⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 2,511.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 171, 3,655; Group B, ll. 1,186, 3,970, 3,984; Group C, ll. 331, 662, 664; *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. v, l. 1,062. Some of the uses here referred to are to church bells, to bells on harness, and to the custom of ringing a bell 'Biforn a cors, was caried to his grave' (C, 664-665). Other uses of the word 'bell' are merely figurative. Chaucer does not speak of bells primarily as musical instruments, although we know they were commonly so employed in the fourteenth century.

tices of his day is the fact that he tells us much more about amateur performance than he does about the activities of professional minstrels. In this respect, the information about musical conditions in the fourteenth century which his writings afford us differs markedly from that obtainable in the types of material discussed on page 64 of this article, as from them we gather many valuable details of which we should be ignorant were we limited to Chaucer's works for information on the music of the period. Within the field of amateur performance, however, Chaucer gives us a characteristically varied series of accounts, showing us the musical activities of ladies and gentlemen, members of the clergy, university students, members of the middle and lower classes, and even the music taught in elementary schools.

The ability to sing and dance, which was essential for a lady of the fourteenth century, is perhaps best represented by Chaucer in the *Book of the Duchesse* where the Black Knight describes his lady love as caroling and singing sweetly.¹ The universality of such accomplishments is suggested by Pandarus when he says to Troilus, 'If oon can singe, another can wel daunce.'² Other references to ladies singing occur in the description of Emelye in the garden at sunrise,³ and of Antigone's 'Trojan song' in *Troilus and Criseyde*.⁴ In the latter case we are told that the song was written by

... the goodlieste mayde
Of greet estate in al the toun of Troye.⁵

showing that ladies not only sang songs, but wrote them, as well. Specific mention of groups of ladies singing and dancing occurs in the *Legend of Good Women*, where Chaucer describes the ladies who formed the train of the god of love,⁶ and in the *Knight's Tale*, where ladies sang and danced at the feast given by Theseus for the men whom Arcite brought with him to fight for Emelye.⁷ Farther down on the social scale we find the Wife of Bath giving as one reason why men marry, 'for she can outhur singe or daunce,'⁸ and saying that she herself could

... daunce to an harpe smale,
And singe, y-wis, as any nightingale.⁹

Alisoun, the young wife of the carpenter in the *Miller's Tale*, sang 'loude and yerne' and danced playfully.¹⁰

¹ Ll. 848-849. ² *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. iv, l. 409.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 1,051-1,055.

⁴ Bk. II, ll. 824-826. See also Bk. v, ll. 575-581, where Chaucer, describing Criseyde's singing, adds musical details not in the corresponding passage in the *Filostrato* (Pt. 5, sts. 54-55). Bk. II, ll. 824-826 of *Troilus and Criseyde* have no counterpart in the *Filostrato*. Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Filostrato, a Translation with Parallel Text*, ed. Griffin and Myrick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1929). ⁵ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. II, ll. 880-881. This also is not in the *Filostrato*.

⁶ A-Text, ll. 199-223. In this version they sing a balade 'in carole-wyse,' i.e., while dancing around in a circle. In the B-Text, this balade is put into the poet's mouth, and the ladies sing a few lines that are entirely different (296-299).

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 2,197-2,202. This passage shows that in describing classical antiquity in mediaeval terms, Chaucer used contemporary musical, as well as other, details.

⁸ *Canterbury Tales*, Group D, l. 259.

⁹ *Ibid.*, ll. 457-458.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 3,257-3,260.

Among people of rank, men as well as women were expected to be able to sing and play musical instruments, which they did both individually and in groups, often with women at social gatherings.¹ In Chaucer's writings they are represented by the young squire among the Canterbury pilgrims and by Aurelius in the *Franklin's Tale*, who was also a squire, by Palamon and Arcite in the *Knight's Tale*, by the Black Knight in the *Book of the Duchesse*, Aeneas in the *Legend of Good Women*, Januarie in the *Merchant's Tale*, Phebus in the *Manciple's Tale*, and Troilus. The squire among the pilgrims could dance and sing, play the flute, and compose both the words and music of his songs.² Aurelius not only sang and danced, but composed many 'layes, songes, compleintes, roundels, virelayes' to express his love for Dorigen.³ Troilus expresses both his love for Criseyde⁴ and his grief at losing her⁵ in songs, but at times is so melancholy over his ill fortune that he cannot bear to hear music.⁶ In the *Knight's Tale* Arcite is similarly affected by his enforced absence from Emelye.⁷ Chaucer makes Aeneas, in the *Legend of Good Women*, a typical mediaeval lover and husband, for, after he married Dido, among his other attentions to her, 'songes wolde he make.'⁸ In contrast to these young lovers, Chaucer shows us Januarie, who, the morning after his marriage, 'chaunteth and craketh.'⁹ The Black Knight in the *Book of the Duchesse* laments his lady's death by reciting a lay, the words of which Chaucer gives.¹⁰ Men of rank did not always sing of love, however, for Arcite rides out into the forest one morning and sings a roundel in honor of 'faire, fresshe May.'¹¹ In the *Manciple's Tale*, Chaucer makes Phebus a mediaeval gentleman who could play many instruments and sing melodiously.¹² He mentions specifically the harp, lute, giterne, and psaltery.¹³

Theoretically members of the clergy were not supposed to indulge in secular music, but Chaucer shows us a friar, a pardoner, a summoner, and a parish clerk who were expert in some very unclerical types of music. The friar not only played the rote, but had a great reputation for singing ballads ('yeddinges'), often ac-

¹ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III, ll. 610-614. This passage describes entertainment after a supper.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 91-96. ³ *Ibid.*, Group F, ll. 925-930 and 943-959.

⁴ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. I, ll. 386-399. The *Filostrato* also refers to Troilus' singing, but does not give the words of his song, as does Chaucer (Pt. 1, st. 37.). *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III, ll. 1,716-1,722 and 1,737-1,771. At this point in the *Filostrato* Troilus also sings, although the words are different (Pt. 3, sts. 74-89.). See also *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. V, ll. 502-504.

⁵ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. V, ll. 631-646. In the *Filostrato* Troilus also seeks to relieve himself by song, but in Boccaccio a different and longer song is given.

⁶ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. V, ll. 456-462. In the *Filostrato*, Boccaccio merely says that 'All diversions, every sweet song, were vexatious to him' (Pt. 5, st. 43). Chaucer mentions instruments.

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 1,361-1,368. Cf. Group B, l. 2,234. ⁸ Ll. 1,269-1,275.

⁹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group E, ll. 1,843-1,850. Professor Robinson defines 'craken' as 'to sing harshly (like a corn-crake).' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 1,065.

¹⁰ Ll. 471-485. In ll. 1,155-1,158 he says that he also made some of the songs. Here, as in the case of the young squire, 'make' refers to the composition of the music; to 'endite' was to write the words. Cf. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, pp. 502-503.

¹¹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 1,500-1,512. Evidently Arcite's song is given only in part, for a roundel contained more than the three lines quoted by Chaucer. Later in the poem Palamon also sings, before going to the temple of Venus to pray for victory in the tournament. *Ibid.*, ll. 2,209-2,212.

¹² *Ibid.*, Group H, ll. 113-118.

¹³ *Ibid.*, ll. 267-268.

companying himself on the harp.¹ Of the summoner, Chaucer tells us only that when the pardoner sang 'ful loude' 'Com hider, love, to me,' the summoner sang a bass accompaniment ('a stif burdoun') louder than any trumpet.² The pardoner, however, was also skilful in sacred music, at least to the extent of singing his offertory 'meriely and loude,' for he knew that after that he could make his appeal for money.³ Although Absolon in the *Miller's Tale* was only a parish clerk, he was well on his way to becoming a friar or a pardoner as far as his musical accomplishments were concerned, for he could dance in twenty different ways and play both the giterne and a small rubible. On the latter he played songs, at times singing as he played.⁴ But Absolon also used his giterne to accompany his singing, as he did when, in courting the carpenter's wife, he sang,

'Now, deere lady, if thy wille be,
I praye yow that ye wole rewe on me,'
Ful wel acordant to his gityrnynge.⁵

The parson among the pilgrims is an entirely different kind of person, who, in accordance with his resemblance to Piers Plowman and the Lollards, speaks of music only to oppose it.⁶

The two Oxford students should be mentioned here, for such people either held minor orders in the church or would probably soon take them. 'Hende Nicholas,' the 'poure scoler' who lived at the carpenter's house, had a variety of musical accomplishments: he played his 'gay sautrie' and sang both *Angelus*

¹ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 235-237 and 264-268. Professor Robinson defines 'yeddinges' as songs or ballads. Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 1,118.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 672-674. Both Robinson and Manly suggest that 'Com hider, love, to me' is the first line or refrain of some popular song, but evidently it has not been identified further. Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 769; *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 536. Emma Dieckmann believes that 'burdoun' here means 'a monotonous and repetitious ground melody' sung by the summoner in a droning voice. 'The Meaning of *Bourdoun* in Chaucer,' *Modern Philology*, xxvi (1928-1929), 279-282.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 709-714.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 3,328-3,333. Since the 'quinible' was a voice part on octave above the treble, this passage ('Ther-to he song somtyme a loud quinible') probably means that Absolon sang the melody an octave higher than he played it on his rubible. This is not surprising, since Chaucer, in l. 3,360, tells us that his voice was 'gentil and smal.'

These lines are valuable evidence as to the nature of instrumental music in the fourteenth century and its relation to vocal music. Whether instrumental music arose largely from the practice of having instruments double the voice parts, or from using compositions primarily intended to be vocal as instrumental selections; and whether instrumentalists sang and played at the same time, either doubling on an instrument the part they sang, or else playing a different part as an accompaniment are disputed questions. Chaucer's picture of Absolon is therefore important, for in it the emphasis appears to be on the use of vocal music for instrumental purposes, rather than on the mere accompaniment of songs which he sang. The fact that 'ther-to he song somtyme a loud quinible' shows that the instrumental rendition of songs was Absolon's normal practice, and that the 'quinible' was merely an embellishment which he sometimes added.

⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 3,352-3,363. Later we are told that, in carrying on his courtship, 'He syngeth, brokkynge as a nyghtyngale.' *Ibid.*, l. 3,377. Robinson defines 'brokkynge' as 'of uncertain meaning; perhaps, using a quavering or broken voice.' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 1,060.

⁶ *Canterbury Tales*, Group 1, l. 227.

ad virginem and the 'kynges noote'.¹ He also played his 'sautrye' when courting the carpenter's wife, but, as Chaucer does not mention his singing at that time, he evidently used the instrument both for solo playing and for accompaniment.² A striking contrast is the sober and pious clerk of Oxford who is one of the pilgrims. Unlike Nicholas, he preferred to use the shelf at the head of his bed for books rather than rich robes 'or fithle or gay sautrye'.³

At the lower end of the social scale, Chaucer gives us an amusing picture of the miller leading the pilgrims out of Southwark with the music of his bagpipe.⁴ The miller of Trumpington, in the *Reeve's Tale*, could also pipe.⁵

In Chaucer's writings it is difficult to tell, in the descriptions of elaborate feasts and other social occasions, how much of the music was furnished by professional minstrels and how much by the guests. There are, however, a few instances in which he speaks definitely of ladies and gentlemen singing or playing instruments, and in others the general tenor of his description makes it appear that non-professionals furnished some of the music. The feast given by Theseus for the men brought by Arcite to fight for Emelye, the garden party given for Dorigen to amuse her during her husband's absence, and the playing and singing after supper in Pandarus' house have been mentioned.⁶ Other instances in Chaucer's writings are the feast which Dido gave for Aeneas,⁷ the celebration in Ennopye after Theseus had escaped from the Minotaur through the help of Adryane,⁸ and the wedding of Custance to Alla, the king of Northumberland.⁹ As Chaucer retold both historical and mythological material in terms of mediae-

¹ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 3,203-3,220. The *Angelus ad virginem* is an anthem preserved in *Ms Harley 7,234*, which has been published by the Chaucer Society. No satisfactory identification has been made of 'the kynges noote.' Professor Manly conjectures that it was probably a ribald song. Both he and Professor Robinson mention a song called 'King Villzamis Note' which the shepherds sing in *The Complaynt of Scotlande*, ed. James A. H. Murray (London: Trübner, 1872), p. 64. Robinson also mentions the attempt of Edward Jones to identify it with the Welsh air 'Ton y Brenhin,' which means 'The King's Tune.' These identifications, however, are only conjectural. Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 787; *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 559.

The *nota*, of which the 'kynges noote' may have been an example, seems to have been a form of instrumental dance music. For various opinions as to its nature, see Ferdinand Wolf, *Über die Lais, Sequenzen, und Leiche; ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Rhythmischen Formen und Singweisen der Volkslieder und der Volksmässigen Kirchen und Kunstlieder im Mittelalter* (Heidelberg: C. F. Winter, 1841), p. 3 ff.; Hugo Riemann, 'Das Kunstlied im 14. - 15. Jahrhundert,' *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, VII (1905-1906), p. 536; J. Wolf, 'Die Musiklehre des Johannes Grocheo,' *Sammelbände der Internationalen Musikgesellschaft*, I (1899-1900), p. 98; J. Wolf, 'Die Tänze des Mittelalters,' *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, I (1918-1919), pp. 12-14; Theodore Gérold, *La Musique au Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1932), p. 297. Since, however, we are so uncertain as to the line between vocal and instrumental music, and as the same compositions were frequently performed in both ways, it would be entirely appropriate for Nicholas to sing a *nota*.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 3,305-3,306.

³ *Ibid.*, ll. 293-296. The fact that in both cases a 'sautrye' is named and that both times it is called 'gay' doubtless shows that students regularly used it for their amusement. Perhaps the shelf at the head of the bed was designed primarily to hold it, but the clerk used his for books instead.

⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 565-566.

⁵ *Ibid.*, l. 3,927.

⁶ See pp. 76, including note 1.

⁷ *Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1,100-1,108. Professor Robinson points out that 'Chaucer here departs from Virgil and gives the description a decidedly mediaeval cast.' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 963.

⁸ *Legend of Good Women*, l. 2,157.

⁹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 703-707.

val life, his account of the music he says he heard in 'Fames halle,'¹ and of Pluto and Proserpina, who, with

... al hir fayërye
Disporten hem and maken melodye²

should be included.

Chaucer also gives us two vivid pictures of amateur music at social gatherings of the common people of his day. Taverns were notorious in the fourteenth century as 'devil's temples' where riotous gatherings were held, often with music as a feature. No description of these is more vivid than the opening lines of the *Pardoner's Tale*, with their reference to 'harpes, lutes, and giternes' to which the 'yonge folk' danced and played at dice.³ The other account deals with Perkin Revelour, the typical London apprentice, who received his name because he could dance 'so wel and jolyly.'⁴

At every brydale wolde he singe and hoppe,
He loved bet the tavern than the shoppe.⁵

Whenever there was a procession in Cheapside, he would rush from the shop and gather a crowd of apprentices like himself to sing and dance until the affair was over.⁶ Chaucer suggests that apprentices played the giterne or the rubible.⁷

In the elementary schools of fourteenth-century England apparently the only music taught was that of the church service, instruction being given in the singing

¹ *Hous of Fame*, ll. 1,393-1,406. When Chaucer speaks of

... the heavenish melodye
Of songs, ful of armonye,
I herde aboute her trone y-songe,

he is using the words 'melodye' and 'armonye' in their older and more general senses, in which they meant very much the same. *The N. E. D.* defines 'melody' as 'Sweet music, whether vocal or instrumental; beautiful arrangement of musical sounds; beauty of musical sounds; tunefulness,' and gives fourteenth-century illustrations (vi, 322). Under 'harmony' it gives, as 'The earliest sense in English,' 'The combination of musical notes, either simultaneous or successive, so as to produce a pleasing effect; melody; music, tuneful sound,' and uses this passage as an illustration.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group E, ll. 2,039-2,041.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group C, ll. 463-471. Although there is no definite proof that this music was not furnished by professional minstrels, it seems probable that it was not, since, a few lines farther on, Chaucer specifically mentions the entrance of people who seem to be professionals.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 4,370-4,371.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 4,375-4,376. ⁶ *Ibid.*, ll. 4,377-4,382. ⁷ *Ibid.*, ll. 4,395-4,396.

Chaucer's writings contain no definite reference to the use of minstrelsy to heighten the disgrace of punishments, which was a regular practice in the fourteenth century. Both Professor Robinson and Professor Manly, however, think that one of the lines in Chaucer's description of Perkin Revelour refers to this custom, of leading criminals to the pillory or gallows in ignominious situations heightened by music:

This joly prentys with his maister bood,
Til he were ny out of his prentishood,
Al were he snybbed bothe erly and late,
And somtyme lad with revel to Newegate.

Ibid., ll. 4,399-4,402. See Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 792; *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 563.

of antiphons so that the pupils could help to carry on divine service if the regular choir boys were absent.¹ Chaucer's *Prioress's Tale* is probably the best illustration we have of this practice.² Professor Carleton Brown, who has thoroughly investigated the legendary background and historical accuracy of this story, points out that the details about the school are Chaucer's addition to a well-known legend.³ The school was not a choir school, but the regular type of elementary school found in many English towns and cities of Chaucer's day. The antiphon Chaucer has his 'litel clergeoun' learn from hearing the other pupils sing it is the *Alma Redemptoris*, rather than the *Gauda Maria*, which occurs in many versions of the tale, and which, because of its slurring reference to the Jews, would be much more apt to offend them than would the *Alma Redemptoris*. Professor Brown believes that the change came about because the *Alma Redemptoris* was actually used in schools, whereas he found no evidence that the *Gauda Maria* was; and that, whatever motivated the change, Chaucer's picture of conditions in elementary schools of his day is essentially accurate.⁴

In addition to the words of songs sung by characters in his poems which Chaucer supplied,⁵ his writings contain several references to contemporary songs that were evidently so well known as to need no explanation.⁶ The best that has been done to identify 'My lief is faren in londe,' which Chaunticleer and Pertelote sing in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, is to cite a song found by Skeat in *Ms. Trinity College Cambridge, R, 3, 19*, which Professor Manly thinks 'may be a later version' of the one referred to by Chaucer.⁷ The lines from *An Amourous Complaint*,

I may wel singe, 'in sory tyme I spende
My lyf'; that song may have confusion!⁸

contain what appears to be the first line or refrain of a contemporary song, but evidently it has not yet been located. Twice in Chaucer's works occurs the line 'Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour' in such a way as to indicate that it was the title or the opening line of a recent song, but nothing seems to be known of its origin.⁹ One other possible reference to a song of the period occurs in the *Miller's Tale*. When Absolon comes to the window courting Alisoun,

¹ C. F. Brown, *A Study of the Miracle of Our Lady Told by Chaucer's Prioress* (London, 1910), pp. 115-121.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 685-1,691, 1,706-1,712, and 1,726-1,740.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-126. Professor Manly shows that the 'song' sung by the 'clergeoun' must have been the one beginning 'Alma redemptoris mater, quae pervia coeli,' since it is an antiphon, and not the 'Alma redemptoris mater, quam de coelis misit pater,' as this is a sequence. *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 626. ⁵ See pp. 72-73, *supra*.

⁶ We have already discussed the futile attempts to identify the 'kinges noote' sung by Nicholas; and the fact that 'Com hider, love, to me,' which the pardoner sings with the summoner, was probably the first line or refrain of a popular song. See pp. 76 and 77, *supra*.

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 638. ⁸ Ll. 24-25.

⁹ In his tale the parson says, 'Wel may that man, that no good werke ne dooth, singe thilke newe Frenshe song: Jay tout perdu mon temps et mon labour,' *Canterbury Tales*, Group 1, ll. 246-247. The other occurrence is in *Fortune*, where the author says that lack of Fortune's favor will not cause him to sing this song. Ll. 1-8.

'Go fro the window, Jakke fool,' she sayde,
'As help me god, it wol nat be "com ba me."'"¹

Robinson thinks that the expression 'com ba me,' which means 'come, kiss me,' is perhaps the name or refrain of a song.²

Between the information concerning professional minstrels and their activities which we obtain from Chaucer's writings and from other sources, there are two chief differences: there is much less material in Chaucer in proportion to what he tells us concerning non-professional music, and what there is deals entirely with the minstrels' activities. We find practically nothing about their names,³ costume, social status, remuneration, guilds or schools.

In his descriptions of tournaments and battles, Chaucer mentions the use of pipes, trumpets, clarions, and nakers, either to spur on the soldiers or to frighten the enemy.⁴ Trumpets or clarions, frequently used for signaling,⁵ were the regular instruments of heralds in connection with their official announcements.⁶ Chaucer twice uses the general word 'minstralcy' to indicate the music played at tournaments and the feasts that often accompanied them.⁷ Although we are not told specifically, in all these cases the instruments were almost certainly played by professional minstrels. In *Sir Thopas*, however, minstrels are definitely mentioned in connection with the arming of the hero, a practice which was in accord with the customs of the time.⁸

In the opening lines of the *Pardoner's Tale* Chaucer gives us his one picture of minstrels performing for the common people. After the description of what appears to be amateur performance of music,⁹ female tumblers and fruit sellers, 'singers with harpes,' and other entertainers enter "To kindle and blowe the fyr of lecherye."¹⁰ This passage is evidence that people who did acrobatic tricks mingled freely with musicians of a lower order, and shows why some members of the clergy spoke out so strongly against minstrels.

Of Chaucer's two references to organs, the one in the *Second Nun's Tale*, showing that organs were used at weddings,¹¹ is of little value, as it is in the earlier versions of the legend of St Cecilia, and is thought to be the reason why music is associated with her.¹² Chaucer's other mention of the organ comes to us

¹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 3,708-3,709.

² Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 789.

³ The only possible name of a contemporary minstrel in Chaucer's writings is that of 'Colle tregetour,' who is named in l. 1,277 of the *Hous of Fame*. There and in a French manual of conversation composed in 1396 he is mentioned as a magician. See Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 894. He may have been a minstrel as well.

⁴ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 2,511-2,512; *Legend of Good Women*, ll. 635-636; *Former Age*, l. 23; *Boethius*, Bk. II, metre 5, ll. 475-480.

⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 2,565-2,566 and 2,599-2,600.

⁶ *Hous of Fame*, ll. 1,564-1,867.

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 2,197 and l. 2,524. In describing the triumphal return of Theseus to Athens, Chaucer uses 'melodye,' but this may refer only to general rejoicing over the victory. *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 872-874. Cf. *ibid.*, ll. 3,650-3,652.

⁸ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 2,035-2,037. Cf. Chaucer, *Complete Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 845.

⁹ See p. 79, *supra*.

¹⁰ *Canterbury Tales*, Group C, ll. 477-482.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Group G, ll. 134-135.

¹² Chaucer, *Complete Works*, ed. Robinson, pp. 864-865.

straight from the life of his own day, for he tells us that Chaunticleer's voice was

... merier than the mery organ
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon.¹

Evidently Chaucer thought of certain aspects of church music as being cheerful, for he not only describes the organ as 'mery'² but also says that the pardoner sang his offertory 'so meriely and loude.'

Chaucer has given us several excellent pictures of the feasts and celebrations in court and castle which gave the minstrels their greatest opportunity. In addition to those already referred to,³ there are several elaborate ones in connection with which Chaucer specifically mentions professional minstrels. After the third course of the feast which Cambinskan, in the *Squire's Tale*, gives on his birthday to celebrate his twentieth year on the throne,

... this king sit thus in his nobleye,
Herkninge his minstralles hir thinges pleye
Biforn him at the bord deliciously.⁴

When the banquet is over, Cambinskan rises and is preceded from the hall by the 'loude minstralcy'e' to his 'chaumbre of parements,'

Ther as they sownen diverse instruments,
That it is lyk an heven for to here.

While Cambinskan sits on his throne, there is a dance, for which these minstrels doubtless provided the music.⁵ The remaining feasts which Chaucer describes are all in celebration of weddings. In his account of the marriage of Custance and Alla of Northumberland, the *trompes* and horns were doubtless played by minstrels, although the dancing and singing were probably done by the guests.⁶ In the *Clerk's Tale*, when Walter with a train of lords and ladies goes to get Griselda to be his bride, he is accompanied by 'many a soun of sondry melodye,'⁷ probably furnished by the minstrels of his court. At the marriage of Lino and Hypermetra in the *Legend of Good Women*,

¹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 4,041-4,042.

² Manly believes that Chaucer here refers to one of the large organs of the time, and not to the little portatives. *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 638. The word 'mery' and the comparison with Chaunticleer's crowing support this opinion. The feeling that the sound of organs was 'mery' was probably due partly to the use of mixture stops. Cf. G. A. Audsley, *The Art of Organ-Building* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1905), I, 30, 38, and 43; N. Dufourcq, *Esquisse d'une Histoire de l'Orgue en France du XIII^e au XVIII^e Siècle* (Paris, Larousse, 1935), pp. 93-94.

³ See pp. 78-79, *supra*. ⁴ *Canterbury Tales*, Group F, ll. 76-79.

This passage confirms the illuminations in contemporary manuscripts which show minstrels playing at feasts and sitting or standing in front of the table across from the guests, who are seated along the opposite side. See, for example, *Ms. Royal*, 14 E iii, fol. 89^r; *Ms. Royal*, 2 B vii, fols 71^v, 168^r, 203^r, 203^v; *Ms. Additional* 18,719, fols 138^r, 139^r, 178^v, 250^v, 253^v; *Ms. Harley* 1,527, fol. 36^v; *Ms. Bodley* 264, fol. 172^v.

⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, Group F, ll. 266-290. In describing the preparations for supper, Chaucer uses the word 'melodye,' probably in its non-musical sense. *Ibid.*, ll. 291-292.

⁶ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 703-707.

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, Group E, ll. 267-273.

Ful is the place of soun of minstralcye,
Of songes amorous of mariage.¹

After the wedding is over, the bride is brought to her chamber 'with revel and with songe.'² The most complete description of music at a wedding is the account of the marriage feast of Januarie and May in the *Merchant's Tale*. As the bride and groom sat at the feast, the palace was 'ful of instrumentz and of vitaille,' The musicians stood before them at the table, and 'At every cours thanne cam loude mynstralcye.' There was dancing both during and after the feast.³

Chaucer's writings do not give much information about the combinations in which musical instruments were played in the fourteenth century. In some cases he merely says that there was 'minstralcye,'⁴ or 'instruments,'⁵ or that the minstrels played their 'thinges.'⁶ In others he is a little more specific, referring to 'the trompes, with the loude minstralcye,'⁷ 'the trompes and the melodye,'⁸ or 'the loude minstralcye . . . ther as they sownen diverse instruments.'⁹ In one place he speaks of 'instruments of strenges in acord,'¹⁰ but whether they were different kinds of instruments he does not say. His statement that when Sarpedon entertained Pandarus and Troilus, every conceivable wind and string instrument was heard at the feast¹¹ is of especial interest as evidence that wind and string instruments were played together.¹² Aside from the long list of instruments in the *Hous of Fame*, which describes so immense a band of musicians playing harps, bagpipes, shawms, many kinds of pipes, trumpets, 'bemes,' clarions, and other instruments which he cannot name that it is worthless as a practical indication of ensemble work in the fourteenth century,¹³ there are only four instances where Chaucer names instruments that appear to have been played together, and some of these are not very certain. There is no assurance that Chaucer intended to imply that the 'harpe and pype and simphonye' he mentions in *Sir Thopas* were played simultaneously,¹⁴ although they would make a logical combination of a bowed string tone, perhaps playing chords, a pipe tone that would stand out as a solo voice, and a plucked string effect either for accompaniment or to mark the rhythm. The 'Pypes, trompes, nakers, clariounes' mentioned in the *Knight's Tale* were the standard combination used at battles and tournaments, and are probably here intended to be played simultaneously.¹⁵ The same is even more true when Chaucer says, in describing the beginning of the tournament, 'Now ringen trompes loude and clarioun,'¹⁶ for these instruments probably signaled the beginning of the affair. The 'harpes, lutes, and giternes' to which the riotous men

¹ Ll. 2,615-2,616.

² Ll. 2,672-2,674.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group E, ll. 1,709-1,728 and 1,768-1,771.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 2,523-2,527.

⁵ *Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1,100-1,102.

⁶ *Canterbury Tales*, Group F, ll. 76-79.

⁷ *Ibid.*, Group A, l. 2,671.

⁸ *Ibid.*, l. 2,565.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Group F, ll. 268-270.

¹⁰ *Parlement of Foules*, l. 197.

¹¹ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. v, ll. 442-448.

¹² The expression 'herd acorde' may be additional evidence for simultaneous performance.

¹³ Ll. 1,188-1,256. This passage is the nearest approach in Chaucer's writings to the extended lists from the works of other authors discussed on pp. 67-68, *supra*.

¹⁴ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 2,004-2,006.

¹⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 2,511-2,512.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, l. 2,600.

in the *Pardoner's Tale* 'daunce and pleye at dees bothe day and night,'¹ may or may not have been played together. The giterne was proverbially a tavern instrument, and all three may well have been used simultaneously. It is clear, however, that Chaucer's writings are of little value for a study of instrumental groupings in his day.

III

In addition to the musical subject matter that has been discussed, Chaucer's knowledge of music influenced his writings in two other ways: the forms of his lyric poetry and various traits of style.

As Professor Manly has shown, Chaucer deliberately selected the new musico-poetic technique of Machaut² in preference to the traditional types of English verse exemplified in the saints' legends and debates, and in the poetry of the alliterative revival, which bulks so large in the fourteenth century.³ In these forms, the balade, lay, virelay, roundel, etc., the poetic structure was closely allied to, if not determined by, that of the music; so that Machaut's contention that the poet should set his own verse to music was entirely natural. No virelays by Chaucer are extant,⁴ and only two complete roundels, with part of a third.⁵ Most of his surviving lyric poems are balades. Probably Chaucer's most famous extant balade is *Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere* in the *Legend of Good Women*.⁶ Sometimes, as in the *Compleynt of Venus*, several balades are joined together into one work, and are brought to a conclusion by an envoy.

The balade usually contained three stanzas and an envoy, with the rhyme scheme ababbcbc running through all the stanzas,⁷ although some of Chaucer's balades use the rhyme scheme ababbcc.⁸ The same rhymes usually run throughout the poem. A more complicated scheme is used in *Womanly Noblesse*, which consists of three stanzas rhyming aabaabbbaa and an envoy of six lines, ababaa. The roundel was a more elaborate form, employing the rhyme scheme abbaababbabb and a system of repetition whereby the first two lines act as the refrain for the second stanza and the whole first stanza is the refrain of the third.

Of the songs which Chaucer has embedded in his longer poems for his characters to sing, the one at the end of the *Parlement of Foules* is a roundel;⁹ *Hyd, Absolon, thy gilte tresses clere*, from the *Legend of Good Women*, is a balade;¹⁰ and all the rest which are complete follow, with one exception, the rhyme scheme ababbcc given for the balade, although they are not so called in the poems.¹¹ In

¹ *Ibid.*, Group C, ll. 466-467.

² See pp. 72-73, *supra*.

³ Manly, *Some New Light on Chaucer*, pp. 274-277.

⁴ Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 959.

⁵ Professor Robinson mentions only *Merciles Beaute* and the one in the *Parlement of Foules*, ll. 680 ff. *Ibid.* He overlooks the fact that a few lines of a roundel are given in the *Knight's Tale*, Group A, ll. 1,500-1,512 and 1,528-1,530, as sung by Arcite.

⁶ A-Text, ll. 203-223.

⁷ *To Rosemounde, The Former Age, Fortune, and the Compleynt of Venus*.

⁸ *Truth, Gentilesse, and Lak of Stedfastnesse*.

⁹ Ll. 680-692.

¹⁰ A-Text, ll. 203-223.

¹¹ *Troilus and Crisyde*, Bk. I, ll. 400-420; Bk. II, ll. 827-875; Bk. III, ll. 1,744-1,771; Bk. V, ll. 631-646. Chaucer calls all of these 'songs' except the one in Bk. III, ll. 1,744-1,771, of which he says that Troilus 'wolde sing in this manere.' Professor Root calls it a hymn, and Professor Robinson, a song. Chaucer, *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. R. K. Root (Princeton, 1926), p. 494; Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 939.

the *Book of the Duchesse* the 'ryme' which the Black Knight 'sayde' 'without note, without song,' and which is called by Chaucer 'a lay, a maner song,' has the rhyme scheme aabbacceddc.¹ In addition to the beginning of the roundel which Arcite sings,² there are a few scraps of songs in Chaucer's poems, but too short to identify the form.³

The stylistic influence of Chaucer's musical knowledge on his writings appears in a number of references to musical things and in a large and varied assortment of figures of speech based on music. The references are to historical or mythological persons or events, to what passed for the history and theory of music, and to songs and singing. The historical or mythological references are to 'the songes that the Muses songe' at the wedding of Philologye and Mercurie,⁴ to the singing of Nisus' daughter at sunrise when Troilus and Pandarus went on the walls of Troy to look for Criseyde,⁵ and to a list of characters in the *Hous of Fame* whom Chaucer says he saw playing various instruments: Orpheus, Orion, Chiron, and 'the Bret Glascurion,' who were harpers;⁶ Atiteris, who had thought 'To pipen ben than Appolloo';⁷ Messenus, Joab, and Theodamus, trumpeters;⁸ and finally, Eolus, who blew his trumpets to send good or bad tidings of people throughout the world at Lady Fame's behest.⁹ In describing the statue of Venus in Theseus' lists in the *Knight's Tale*, Chaucer places a citole in the goddess' hand, although in his source Vanus bears, not a musical instrument of any kind, but a 'concham marinam.'¹⁰

Chaucer's writings contain two passages bearing on the supposed history of music: a reference to the idea that Tubal first discovered music from the sound of his brothers' hammers ringing on the anvil,¹¹ and a statement that the ancient Britons sang their lays to the accompaniment of instruments.¹² Although he does not seem to have been especially interested in the theoretical aspects of music,¹³ Chaucer twice mentions the theory of the music of the spheres, calling it the source of all earthly music.¹⁴

¹ Ll. 462-486. ² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 1,509-1,512.

³ *Hous of Fame*, ll. 1,404-1,406; *Legend of Good Women*, A-Text, ll. 118-143; B-Text, ll. 291-299; *An Amorous Complaynt*, ll. 24-25. ⁴ *Canterbury Tales*, Group E, ll. 1,732-1,735.

⁵ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. v, 1,107-1,113. ⁶ Ll. 1,201-1,208. ⁷ Ll. 1,227-1,232.

⁸ Ll. 1,243-1,246. ⁹ Ll. 1,564-1,867.

¹⁰ Chaucer's source here seems to be the description of Venus in chapter 5 of Albricus Philosophus' *De Deorum Imaginibus*. C. Iulii Hygini, *Augusti Liberti, Fabularum Liber, ad omnium poetarum lectionem mire necessarius, et nunc denuo excesus. Eiusdem Poeticon Astronomicon Libri Quatuor. Quibus Accesserunt Similis Argument, [among others] Albrici Philosophi. De Deorum Imaginibus Liber. Index Rerum Sententiarum, et Fabularum, in His Omnibus Scitu Dignarum, Copiosissimus* (Parisiis: Apud Ioannem Parant, 1578), p. 171^r. Evidently the change to a citole is due to Chaucer.

¹¹ *Book of the Duchesse*, ll. 1,160-1,170. The use of 'Tubal' for 'Jubal' was not original with Chaucer. See Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 886. ¹² *Canterbury Tales*, Group F, ll. 709-712.

¹³ See p. 71, *supra*.

¹⁴ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. v, ll. 1,807-1,813; *Parelement of Foules*, ll. 57-63. With regard to the latter passage, in which Chaucer mentions nine spheres, Professor Robinson points out that 'Cicero and Macrobius distinctly recognize only seven notes of the spheres, excluding the primum mobile altogether, and giving the same note to the sphere of the fixed stars and to that of one planet (probably Saturn). Macrobius gives a single note to Venus and Mercury.' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 902. Chaucer does not mention these details.

In addition to Chaucer's remarks about singing that help us construct a picture of fourteenth-century music, he frequently speaks of singing and of songs in more general terms, although he sometimes uses the word 'song' to indicate literary compositions, or so indefinitely that we cannot tell whether he means poetry or music.¹ In accordance with poetic practice in his day, he often mentions the singing of birds, in one case declaring his own delight in their music.² Some of his bird passages, however, are anthropomorphic, as in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*,³ the *Legend of Good Women*,⁴ the *Parlement of Foules*,⁵ and the *Book of the Duchesse*.⁶ Of a somewhat different nature is the episode in the *Squire's Tale* where Canacee, because of the magic ring she possesses, understands what the birds are saying when they sing.⁷

More numerous than references of the types just discussed are comparisons and other figures of speech based on music. Although Haeckel listed seven in his discussion of Chaucerian proverbs,⁸ and B. J. Whiting included thirty-three in his book on the subject,⁹ if one counts all literary devices that mention music, there are fifty-nine. These are employed as Whiting shows that Chaucer uses proverbs: to advance the narrative, to prepare the reader for coming events, and for characterization. Often they are the means by which he applies his humor most pertinently.¹⁰

Chaucer's writings contain more figures of speech and other literary devices based on singing than on any other form of music. In some of these, singing is compared with something else to indicate its qualities, while in others, the words

¹ Musical uses of 'song' and 'sing' are references to the singing of 'Osanne' in heaven (*Canterbury Tales*, Group G, ll. 67-70), to the priest who sings 'but o masse in a day' (*ibid.*, Group D, ll. 1,724-1,728), and to the prohibition against singing mass in a church that has been defiled (*ibid.*, Group I, ll. 964-965). An amusing passage associated with the singing of minstrels, although it does not specifically mention music, is the appeal for silence at the beginning of the Second Fit of the *Tale of Sir Thopas* (*ibid.*, Group B, ll. 2,081-2,086). Non-musical uses of 'song' are the prioress' reference to the tale she is about to tell (*ibid.*, ll. 1,671-1,677) and Chaucer's apology for any plagiarisms he may unknowingly commit (*Legend of Good Women*, A-Text, ll. 61-70). See also *Anelida and Arcite*, ll. 1-7, and *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III, ll. 1,807-1,820 and Bk. v, ll. 1,373-1,379.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 9, 1,491-1,492, and 2,209-2,212; Group F, ll. 52-55; *Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1,757-1,758. The burlesque passage from the *Tale of Sir Thopas* describing the beautiful songs of the 'sparhawk,' the 'papejay,' the 'thrustelcok,' and the 'wodedove' is Group B, ll. 1,956-1,961. Chaucer's expression of his delight in the singing of birds is in the *Legend of Good Women*, A-Text, ll. 29-39.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 4,067-4,071, where Chaunticleer and Pertelote sing 'in swete accord, "my lief is faren in londe"'; l. 4,391, where Chaunticleer speaks of the singing of his hens; and ll. 4,478-4,501, 4,510-4,511, and 4,619-4,620, which deal with the fox's attempt to flatter Chaunticleer into singing like his father.

⁴ B-Text, ll. 130-147, 153-159, and 167-170, which describe the birds' song on 'the frste morwe of May.' See also A-Text, ll. 141-143.

⁵ Ll. 673-692, which tell of the birds singing the roundel, 'Now welcom somer, with thy sonne softe.'

⁶ Ll. 294-320, which describe the birds singing a 'solempne servyse,' 'som . . . lowe, som hye, and al of oon acorde.'

⁷ *Canterbury Tales*, Group F, ll. 396-400; 432-650.

⁸ Willibald Haeckel, *Das Sprichwort bei Chaucer* (Erlangen: A. Deichert, 1890), pp. 33, 44, 48, 49, and 52.

⁹ B. J. Whiting, *Chaucer's Use of Proverbs* (Cambridge, 1934), pp. 40, 57, 63, 77, 94, 100, 156, 157, 160, 169, 175, 176, 178, 179, 180, 184, 189, 190, 191, 192, and 193.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 152-154.

'song' and 'sing' are used with various meanings, sometimes figurative. In illustration of the former use, the knight, in telling his tale, says of Emelye that 'as an aungel hevenly she song.'¹ Similar comparisons occur in the *Parlement of Foules*² and in the *Nun's Priest's Tale* when the fox is flattering Chaunticleer.³ Elsewhere in the tale, however, he had said that Chaunticleer 'Song merier than the mermayde in the see,'⁴ and again that his voice was merrier than the organ in church on mass days.⁵ Chaucer uses singing to characterize other things when he compares the delight of Troilus and Criseyde in each other's words to the joy of birds in their singing,⁶ when both Dido and Anelida liken their 'compleynt' to the swan's song,⁷ when the Man of Lawe, in his tale, says of a 'messenger fulfild of dronkenesse' 'thou janglest as a jay,'⁸ and when, in the *Reeve's Tale*, Chaucer says that the snoring of the miller's wife was like a 'burdon' to that of her husband, and Aleyn, the clerk, 'that herd this melodye,' refers to it as a 'sang' and a 'compline.'⁹ Singing is also used to indicate the spread of some idea or of a person's reputation, as when Criseyde, after deserting Troilus, says that 'no good word' about her shall ever be 'y-written nor y-songe.'¹⁰ Both rejoicing and lamentation are said to be expressed by singing. For example, the Man of Lawe says of Custance, when her father insists she must marry the 'sowdan' of Surrie, 'Bot forth she moot, wher-so she wepe or singe';¹¹ and the miller, in telling how the carpenter's wife cares only for Nicholas, says, 'Absolon may waille and singe "allas."'¹² More definitely figurative are the host's words to the pilgrims shortly after they have left the Tabard Inn:

If even-song and morwe-song acorde,
Lat see now who shal telle the firste tale,¹³

and the two occurrences of the expression 'sing Placebo,' which was proverbial for flattering complaisance.¹⁴ Another figurative use is that of *Chaunte-pleure*, a French idiom for joy that ends in sadness. Anelida writes in her 'compleint' to

¹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 1,055. ² Ll. 190-191.

³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 4,481-4,482. ⁴ *Ibid.*, ll. 4,459-4,460.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 4,041-4,042. See also *ibid.*, Group H, ll. 113-118, 136-138, and 294-295.

⁶ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. iv, ll. 1,432-1,435.

⁷ *Legend of Good Women*, ll. 1,355-1,357; *Anelida and Arcite*, ll. 346-350. In the *Parlement of Foules*, l. 342, Chaucer mentions 'The jalous swan against his deth that singeth,' but there is no figure of speech. ⁸ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 771-775.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Group A, ll. 4,165-4,171. The appropriateness of the reference to the compline lies in the fact that it is the last canonical hour of the Western Church; that is, the last prayer of the day, which is to be said after sunset.

¹⁰ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. v, ll. 1,058-1,060.

See also *ibid.*, Bk. iv, ll. 799-800; *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, ll. 3,949-3,956; *Hous of Fame*, ll. 721-724; *Parlement of Foules*, ll. 514-516.

¹¹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group B, l. 294. See also *ibid.*, Group D, ll. 1,191-1,194; *A Complaint to His Lady*, ll. 51-53; *Anelida and Arcite*, ll. 183-189.

¹² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 3,398. See also *ibid.*, Group B, ll. 1,308-1,310; *ibid.*, Group D, ll. 215-216; *ibid.*, Group E, ll. 1,267-1,276; *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. iv, ll. 1,163-1,166.

¹³ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 830-831.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Group D, ll. 2,074-2,076; *ibid.*, Group I, l. 616. See Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 812.

Arcite, 'I fare as doth the song of Chaunte-pleure.'¹ The friar uses 'sing' in a slang sense when he says of the archdeacon:

But certes, lechours did he grettest wo;
They sholde singen, if that they were hent.²

If not slang, the expression 'to syng a fool a masse,' meaning to be overbold in doing something, was certainly idiomatic. It occurs in *Troilus and Criseyde* when Criseyde has almost stupefied Troilus by asking him to continue his lordship over her.³

Chaucer frequently uses the words 'melodye' and 'armonye' apparently to indicate mere beautiful sound, and not specifically music in one part as distinct from that in several parts.⁴ 'Smaile fowles maken melodye'⁵ and the birds in the *Parlement of Foules* that Chaucer heard sing 'With voys of aungel in hir armonye'⁶ are typical instances.⁷

Most of the remaining figures of speech in Chaucer's writings that refer to music have to do with instruments. Several are comparisons used to describe the nature of some sound. The trumpet was usually the criterion for loudness, as in the description of Emetreus, king of India, whose 'voys was as a trompe thunderinge.'⁸ Joab's and Theodamus' trumpeting, however, is referred to as being clear.⁹ Chaucer evidently thought of bells as cheerful, for he has the shipman say of the tale he is about to tell,

. . . I shal clinken you so mery a belle
That I shal waken al this companye.¹⁰

The sound of bells was sometimes spoken of as being full and round,¹¹ and at others as rather empty and meaningless.¹² The phrase 'bere the belle' meant to take the lead,¹³ and to ring 'out a process lyk a belle' evidently referred to an overpowering denunciation.¹⁴ The ringing of bells was also used figuratively to symbolize the spread of a reputation, especially a bad one.¹⁵ Closely related to this

¹ *Anelida and Arcite*, ll. 317-324. Professor Robinson points out that the expression is derived from 'A French moral poem of the thirteenth century, entitled *La Pleure-chante*, which warns those who sing but will weep hereafter.' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 900. See also Machaut, *Oeuvres*, II, 181.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group D, ll. 1,310-1,311 and 1,315-1,316. See also *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 587. ³ Bk. III, ll. 85-88. For another figurative use of 'song' see *ibid.*, Bk. IV, ll. 1-7.

⁴ See p. 72, note 4, *supra*. ⁵ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 9. ⁶ Ll. 190-191.

⁷ See also *Canterbury Tales*, Group H, ll. 113-115; *Hous of Fame*, ll. 1,393-1,398; *Book of the Duchesse*, l. 569; *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III, ll. 185-187.

⁸ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 2,174. See also *ibid.*, ll. 672-674; *Hous of Fame*, l. 1,681 and ll. 1,802-1,803. Chaucer's reference, in the *Parson's Tale*, to the trumpet of the Judgment Day is probably merely conventional. *Canterbury Tales*, Group I, ll. 158-160.

⁹ *Canterbury Tales*, Group E, ll. 1,718-1,721.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Group B, ll. 1,184-1,187; see also *ibid.*, Group A, ll. 169-172.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, Group C, ll. 329-332. Professor Manly defines 'round' as 'roundly, freely, fully.' *Canterbury Tales*, ed. Manly, p. 693.

¹² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 3,895-3,898. See also Group B, l. 3,970, where Harry Bailey swears a mild oath 'by seint Poules belle.' ¹³ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III, ll. 198-199.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, Bk. II, ll. 1,615-1,617.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, ll. 804-805; Bk. V, ll. 1,058-1,064. Cf. Gower, *Confessio Amantis*, Bk. II, ll. 1,727-1,729. See also *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. III, ll. 183-189.

idiom was another involving the horn. In denouncing Jason, in the *Legend of Good Women*, Chaucer exclaims, 'Have at thee, Jasoun! now thyn horn is blowe!'¹ The idea that a person may as well go whistle for consolation is expressed in two different ways: 'Absolon may blow the bukkes horn'² and 'Pype in an ivy leef.'³ The figure of the piper and the dancer as symbols of gaiety is used by the Reeve when he says, 'We hopen ay, whyl that the world wol pype.'⁴ Chaucer uses the verb 'tabour' exactly as we use 'drum' in the sense of 'drumming something in,'⁵ and the noun 'tabour' as a criterion for something stretched very tight.⁶ Several of Chaucer's musical figures of speech are based on stringed instruments. For example, in indicating a large number, he says there were more 'Then on instruments ben cordes,'⁷ evidently in allusion to the large number of strings on some instruments.⁸ Other ideas expressed are a warning not to 'harp on one string,'⁹ the accuracy with which the harp responds to the player's touch¹⁰ and the old conception that the ass is too dull to appreciate music.¹¹

Finally, Chaucer has one musical figure of speech that is neither specifically vocal nor instrumental, when Pandarus says to Troilus,

Though al this toun cryede on this thing, by note,
I nolde sette at al that noyse a grote.¹²

As 'by note' meant 'according to notes, or in concord, all together,'¹³ this passage shows that group performance of music from notes was common enough that notes were thought of as a means for keeping several performers together.

These references to various aspects and uses of music, and especially these figures of speech based upon music, show us that Chaucer was not only ac-

¹ L. 1,383. Robinson suggests that 'The figure of the horn possibly . . . refers to the public crying of the misdeeds of condemned criminals. But the phrase *Have at thee* suggests that Chaucer had in mind rather the hunter's horn, sounded to start the pursuit of the game.' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 963. The word 'thyn,' however, might make the first suggestion more probable.

² *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 3,386-3,388.

³ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. v, ll. 1,432-1,433; *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, ll. 1,837-1,838. See Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 778, and *The Book of Troilus and Criseyde*, ed. Root, p. 552.

⁴ *Canterbury Tales*, Group A, l. 3,876.

⁵ *Legend of Good Women*, A-Text, ll. 328-332.

⁶ *Canterbury Tales*, Group D, ll. 2,267-2,268.

⁷ *Hous of Fame*, ll. 695-696.

⁸ Robinson defines these 'cordes' as 'musical chords,' evidently referring to the simultaneous sounding of more than one tone. Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 891. But considering the simplicity of the musical instruments of the period, and hence the fact that people were probably not so accustomed to harmonic instrumental music as we are, largely because of our keyboard instruments and our highly developed orchestras, it seems more probable that Chaucer here refers to the strings of instruments. Theodore G  rold mentions harps of that time which had twenty-five and even thirty strings. *La Musique au Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1932), p. 374.

⁹ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. II, ll. 1,030-1,036. Chaucer is correct in his statement as to playing the harp with the finger nails. Galpin, *Old English Instruments of Music*, p. 16.

¹⁰ *Legend of Good Women*, B-Text, ll. 89-93. Professor Robinson points out that 'the simile of the harp suggests the title of Machaut's lost *Dit de la Harpe*.' Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 955.

¹¹ *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. I, ll. 729-735. Although the line, 'Or artow lik an asse to the harpe,' is taken literally from Boethius, Chaucer expands it into an effective piece of sarcasm in Pandarus' mouth. See Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 928.

¹² *Troilus and Criseyde*, Bk. IV, ll. 585-586.

¹³ Chaucer, *Works*, ed. Robinson, p. 1,091. Robinson's note on p. 941, in which he says that 'by note' apparently means 'in song, music,' does not seem applicable here.

quainted with the art in many of its applications, but could also think in terms of these applications and characteristics, using them in his characterizations of people and in his descriptions of incidents and action. But Chaucer was not the only poet of his time who did these things. We find similar cases not only in the poetry of Machaut and Deschamps, where we would expect them, but also in the writings of so prosaic a man as John Gower. The political poems and songs which Thomas Wright collected also show instances, as do many other minor works of the period. We must conclude, therefore, that when Chaucer used musical figures of speech or referred freely to musical matters, he was making superlative use of a device that was commonly employed.

IV

What was Chaucer's personal attitude toward music, as differentiated from his knowledge and employment of the art? In answering this question, we must remember that Chaucer's writings may not be a very accurate indication of his musical interests. For example, one would hardly know from Machaut's poetry that he was the greatest French musician of his day. We must not, therefore, expect too much definite evidence from the writings of so objective and dramatic an author as Chaucer.

In the first place, it is clear that Chaucer either did not know or did not care much about the theoretical aspects of music. His writings present us with a fairly representative, though not a complete, list of the instruments in use at that time, but he tells us very little about ensembles. He was interested in the numerous ways in which music of many kinds entered into the lives of all sorts of people in fourteenth-century England, and yet he tells us much more about amateur musical performance than he does about the activities of the professional minstrels. It is typical of Chaucer that his account, in the *Nun's Priest's Tale*, of the pursuit of the fox with horns is more vigorous in its humor and homeliness than are many of the episodes in which he describes the use of trumpets, drums, and pipes in battles and at tournaments. Picturesque tales of the origin and history of music seem to have appealed to him. He knew some of the popular songs of the day, and quoted them upon occasion, and seems to have had an ear for music whenever he found it in any walk of life. Chaucer would hardly have picked up so many bits of information about music as it was used by all types of people had he not been interested in it. There is also the matter of his possible musical ability as performer and composer. In a time like Chaucer's, when the art was not so highly developed, such ability might not argue the interest and perhaps the talent it does today; yet had Chaucer been totally devoid of interest and ability in music, he probably would not have been much of a success as a squire at court, and he might easily not have chosen the Machaut school of poetry for his models. On the other hand, it was soon discovered at court that he was an excellent diplomatist, and his career in the London custom house shows that he had a decidedly realistic and practical turn of mind. This correlates well with the type of poetry he wrote during his mature years, and would help to account for his gradual abandonment of Machaut's type of verse and general artistic outlook. It seems

reasonable to suppose, therefore, that as a young man Chaucer showed a general literary and artistic bent, which found a favorable soil for growth in various noble and royal households. At this stage of his career, he may easily have been very much interested in music, either as an adjunct to the new type of poetry he was trying to introduce into England, or for its own sake. He may have composed, played, and sung with great enthusiasm and with a certain amount of ability. But as he grew older and settled into his more mature points of view and interests, a more practical, realistic, and purely literary inclination showed itself. He doubtless retained throughout his life the interest in music which any cultured person may have who is by nature endowed with some appreciation of the art and a certain amount of ability in it. There is no reason to suppose, however, that Chaucer was equally talented in the fields of music and literature, for had he been, we would doubtless have some indication of the fact in the case of so famous a person.

Chaucer's seeming preference for vocal rather than instrumental music may have been due to the fact that in his day instruments were not capable of producing as beautiful effects as the human voice. On the other hand, he speaks, in the *Parlement of Foules*, of 'a ravissing swetnesse of instruments of strenges in acord,' so that his apparent preference for vocal music may be due merely to an accidental preponderance of appreciative references to it. Another question concerns the gusto of some of Chaucer's musical figures of speech. He tells us, for instance, that Chaunticleer's

. . . vois was merier than the mery orgon
On messe-dayes that in the chirche gon;

and in the *Hous of Fame* he speaks of

. . . the hevenish melodye
Of songes, ful of armonye.

Chaucer was, however, a man full of the joy of living, who could say of the canon who overtook the pilgrims on the road, 'it was joye for to seen him swete.' We should not, therefore, attribute undue significance to the enthusiasm of some of his musical figures of speech. We are probably correct when we picture him as a person ideally endowed by nature to be a portrayer of life as he saw it around him, and as he lived it himself. Of this complete picture, music was a part, and Chaucer possessed sufficient interest and ability in the art to use it as he used any other material for his vivid and graphic panorama of life in England of the fourteenth century.

